

High-quality, comprehensive teaching degrees should not be compromised by well-intentioned, short-term solutions

Australian Catholic University has urged caution amid calls to reduce comprehensive postgraduate teaching degrees to one-year courses.

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said as Australia's largest provider of teachers, the university was strongly committed to exploring measures to respond to the nation-wide teacher shortage, but simple solutions were not always appropriate choices.

"The teacher workforce shortage is a very significant national challenge. We understand and support the desire to put more teachers into classrooms faster. However, the quality of our teachers, the experiences they gain as pre-service teachers and the academic rigour of teaching courses should not be compromised in the process," he said.

"We know well-educated, well-trained, well-experienced teachers make a difference in the lives of our students.

"It's not just about how quickly we can graduate teachers, we need to ensure classroom readiness – the success of our early childhood, primary and secondary school students depends on it."

ACU Executive Dean of Education and Arts Professor Mary Ryan said while postgraduate students had authentic skills and life experiences, they needed intensive training, support, and classroom experience to become effective teachers and school leaders.

"Rushing graduates into classrooms might lead to an immediate increase in teachers, however this risks longevity in the profession. We don't want to see graduates enter the profession only to leave shortly after due to being under-prepared and feeling unsupported for what is complex work."

Professor Ryan said teaching performance assessments such as the ACU-designed Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA), which is moderated against 18 Australian universities, assured classroom readiness, but could be compromised by a reduction in course time.

"We need to ensure we maintain the quality of our teachers and put more efforts into attracting school leavers and career-changers into this dynamic and rewarding career for the long term rather than compromising the standards our children deserve," she said.

"We offer multiple flexible pathways to school leavers and postgraduates including an 18-month accelerated early childhood teaching degree. These are the sort of innovative pathways we need to invest in and promote for the future of the profession without compromising quality.

“This aim has been at the core of why ACU has not supported calls for a one-year program in our submissions to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into teacher shortages or the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.”

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